

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

Training National Leaders for "Ministry"

Ray and Pam
Trantham

 **Odessa Missions**
Training National Leaders for "Missions"



Unpredictable in Ukraine: I was asked to preach during our Bible college worship service and I chose my text from James 4:13-15. In this text the author says, *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"*

We have been back in Ukraine for almost two months. The only thing we know for certain is that as James says, "we do not know what will happen tomorrow." Here in Ukraine, we are safe, comfortable, busy, and needed, ... but the reality is that the situation is very unpredictable. Let us begin by explaining, that we are glad to be in Ukraine, where we can do the work that we were sent to do. The Bible college is operating, we are working, and we are making a difference. The college has had to make adjustments and we are taking the necessary precautions, but work is getting done.

We face several uncertainties: One uncertainty concerns the situation in Ukraine. The concern is not for us, who live within sight of the Bible college, but for students traveling and possible government restrictions if the situation worsens this fall. Most of our students do not live close enough to commute on a daily basis. We are having to make adjustments for the fact that people cannot always be on our campus. On-line classes are a very great challenge in Ukraine, especially for students without computers in rural areas.

The cross-cultural mission program is the greatest challenge. Following my visit to Uganda in February, we made the decision to focus this entire group of students upon Uganda. We have had students successfully working in Uganda for the past seven years, and this has proven an area where Ukrainians can make a real difference. We were forced to make the difficult decision to postpone the start of this program until March. Normally these students would be living on our campus and we would travel with them to churches each weekend. There have been recent outbreaks of COVID in several area churches and there are travel restrictions between different regions of Ukraine. Ukraine has also closed its borders to foreigners, which results in limited and unpredictable air travel. Perhaps, the greatest challenge is that the borders of Uganda remain closed. We have one student who is stuck in Uganda and unable to return to Ukraine. With the uncertainties of global travel, we are reluctant to risk stranding an entire group of students in a foreign country.



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Another challenge we are facing is the question about travel to America to update supporters. In recent years, we have traveled to the States over our winter break and updated half of our supporters, each year. Earlier this year, when we were stranded in the States, many congregations were limiting in-person services, which limited us in presenting updates about Ukraine. We normally buy tickets a few months in advance. The airline is selling tickets, but not always flying as scheduled. There is a real concern about not being allowed back into Ukraine. With all of these issues in mind, we are considering "staying put" in Ukraine, so that we can continue doing ministry. We rely on your monthly support and feel an obligation to keep you as informed as possible. We are exploring options for doing on-line updates to supporters in the States. At present, we are postponing making plans for traveling to the States as we wait to see how the COVID virus and international travel develop.

We are thankful and dependent upon your monthly support. We are also, safe and comfortable staying where we are in Ukraine. We need your prayers as we continue to assess the changing situations and serve in the best way possible.

Graduation: Graduation is normally in June, but it was postponed due to all schools and colleges being closed in Ukraine. We are still restricted to a maximum of 50 people in a room. We have chosen to address this problem by graduating different groups of students, every two weeks. This past weekend our mission students graduated. Alona arrived from Kenya, just in time for graduation. Tanya is in Donetsk, and unable to travel because of the virus. Viktoria is still in Uganda, and unable to leave because of the virus. But God is on his throne, and still wants his children to carry out his Great Commission. We are reminded of the text in Luke 10, where Jesus sent out his disciples two-by-two, on a short mission trip. When they return, the text tells us they were all filled with "joy." That is the same joy we saw on the faces of our returning students. They all reported that their mission internship was difficult, but that they wanted to return.

I want to invite you to join with us in obedience to our Lord's command in Luke 10:2, *"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* We need your prayers and your participation in this great task that is set before us.



One missionary family gave birth to twins while we were away.



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